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EDITORIAL.

The Agricultural Experiment Stations are now fairly launched on their way, and their reports are beginning to come in rapidly. Some of them are valuable, some are worthless, evidently having been made to order. It is, perhaps, hardly fair to make such a criticism so early in the history of these stations, but we wish to do them a service if possible. The requirements of a report at certain stated intervals is American, but dreadfully unscientific, and the general supposition is that at these stations, at last, we have endowment for research and not simply one for "reports." If they are to begin at once with reports upon all sorts of hasty and meaningless experiments, we shall be worse off than we were before. We thoroughly understand that many in charge of this work can not perform any other kind of experiments, and concerning these we have nothing to say. But there are those in charge who know how to work, for they have already made a record, and we want to see the opportunity given them. The popular American idea is to experiment two or three weeks, and then write a report, and if real workers are compelled to come under such an order of things, their publication can be but little better than others. We would protest, therefore, against compelling a botanist at one of these stations to write a report when he has nothing to say. He must not be hurried even, for the best experimental work can only be done with the idea of unlimited time as a factor. A station director must know that his man is competent, that he is actually doing work, and then wait patiently for results. The ability to get out a report at short intervals ought to be taken as an indication of a man's incompetency as an investigator. If the requirement of "reports" from the scientific staff of these stations could be removed, and only monographs prepared after ample investigation, our new venture might really prove the beginning of an endowment for research.

CURRENT LITERATURE.

Watson's Contributions to American Botany.

A great herbarium should always be productive, and it is of inestimable advantage to American botanists that our greatest herbarium has always had in it men with the spirit and ability to work. The accumulation of a great herbarium which contributes little or nothing to general botanical knowledge is hardly better than a miser's accumulation of money. The "Contributions" from the Harvard Herbarium form a set of botanical publications that no working botanist can be without, or else he will be working in the dark.

The last of these is before us.[1] The first part is a report of a collection of plants made by Dr. E. Palmer, in 1887, chiefly about Guaymas, Mexico. The season was very dry and unfavorable, and this, too, in a country that is normally dry and unfavorable, and yet 415 native species were collected, 89 of which are wholly new. This region of the Gulf of California is one of great interest botanically. It is probably the northern limit on the Pacific coast of such tropical genera as Rhizophora, Hæmatoxylon, Citharexylum, Ficus, etc. Among the 415 species, there are 50 Gramineæ, 50 Compositæ, 44 Leguminosæ, and 32 Euphorbiaceæ. The important orders Ranunculaceæ, Rosaceæ, Saxifragaceæ, Umbelliferæ, Ericaceæ, Cupuliferæ, Coniferæ, and Orchidaceæ are wholly unrepresented. Excluding Cyperaceæ and Gramineæ, there are only 5 endogenous species in the entire collection. The new genera proposed are *Malperia* (Agerateæ among Compositæ), *Pelucha* (Plucheineæ among Compositæ), and *Pattalias* (Asclepiadaceæ). The second part contains descriptions of new species, chiefly Californian, and also proposes the restoration of *Sisyrinchium anceps* Cav. Dr. Watson finds that two forms can be readily distinguished, one (*S. anceps* Cav.) with branching stems and globose strongly pitted seeds less than half a line in diameter, the other (*S. angustifolium* Mill.) with simple stems and angled less pitted seeds about twice larger than the other.

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[1] Watson, Sereno.—Contributions to American Botany. xvi. (Proc. Am. Acad. xxiv, pp. 36-87)). Issued Jan. 31, 1889.

Saccardo's Sylloge Fungorum.[2]

Two more volumes of the Sylloge are before us, volume VI and the second part of volume VII, and but one volume remains to complete this great work. The invaluable service to mycologists in thus bringing together in convenient form descriptions of all known fungi has already been alluded to in notices of the earlier volumes. The present parts follow the treatment already well established, and which it is unnecessary to describe in this connection.

The sixth volume contains descriptions of 3911 species, being more than quadruple the number belonging to these orders known when Fries published his Epicrisis in 1838, and still the harvest of new species is unabated.

The first part of the seventh volume was noticed recently; the second part, now before us, deals with the Ustilagineæ and Uredineæ, two specially interesting groups of parasitic fungi. As there have been many collectors of these plants in North America, there are consequently a considerable proportion of the species accredited to this country—of the Ustilagineæ nearly one-fourth.

As in every other work touching upon the classification of these groups, the protean changes of synonymy bring to light old, new, or little known names to replace those in use. For example, we find Ustilago Candollei given as Sphacelotheca Hydropiperis, Puccinia Petalostemonis transferred to the genus Uropyxis, established by Schröter for the curious Puccinia on Amorpha, Puccinia vertisepta from New Mexico changed to Diorchidium Tracyi, Melampsora Epilobii and M. Crotonis both placed under Pucciniastrum. One notices by this that a number of genera, not heretofore much in favor, have been reinstated. The Æcidia forms have been distributed so far as possible, and especially so under Gymnosporangium.

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[2] SACCARDO, P. A.—Sylloge fungorum omnium hucusque cognitorum; Vol. VI, Polyporeæ, Hydneæ, Thelephoreæ, Clavarieæ, Tremellineæ. 928 pp., roy. 8 vo. Patavii, 1888.—58 francs.

Same; Vol. VII, Pars II, Ustilagineæ et Uredineæ, digessit J. B. De Toni. 882 pp., roy. 8 vo. Patavii, 1888.—29 francs.

The thing that one misses in these volumes, and yet a thing scarcely to be expected in such a compilation, is a critical valuation of the species. In fact it takes no very extensive knowledge of the American flora, to be able to eliminate a number of the so-called species as having no just claim to recognition, and to add to the range of other species. But with all faults of omission and error, to a large part inseparable from such an undertaking, the work is still one of great value, and will do much toward helping and elucidating the systematic study of fungi.

Minor Notices.

DR. C. C. PARRY has just published a revision[3] of the genus Ceanothus, based upon field observations on the Pacific coast covering a period of forty years. The work heretofore has necessarily been done with fragmentary herbarium specimens, and Dr. Parry's observations supply much needed information. Before enumerating the species the author makes some very interesting general observations, and also discusses the characters by which species and groups can be most satisfactorily defined. The Pacific coast of California constitutes the most suitable home for the genus, "and in its varied aspects of soil and climate, invites to the largest display of specific forms." In California the greatest profusion and variety of forms are found in the Santa Cruz range of mountains. Two new species are described, *C. Andersoni* and *C. divergens.*

IN THE PUBLICATION referred to above, Dr. Parry discusses certain species of Chorizanthe and describes two new ones, *C. Andersoni* and *C. robusta.*

THE FIRST BULLETIN from the laboratories of Iowa State University is before us. It is a publication of 96 pages, containing eight articles, three of which are botanical, with the following titles: The saprophytic fungi of E. Iowa—the genus Agaricus, Series I and II, by T. H. McBride; The Peronosporeæ in Iowa, by T. H. McBride and A. S. Hitchcock; Botanical notes, by T. H. McBride. The botanical notes speak of spore-dispersal among fungi, an undesirable immigrant (Solanum rostratum), and a mould growing in hydrochloric acid.

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[3] PARRY, C. C.—Ceanothus L. A synoptical list, comprising 33 species, with notes and descriptions. (Proc. Davenport Acad. V, pp. 162-174.) Issued Feb. 9, 1889.